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The San Diego

Union-Tribune.

SOUTH COUNTY
35¢
TAX INCL.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Help coming for veterans' widows?

Re: "Further clarification of benefits for vets' widows" (Letters, July 30):

Peter DiRenza and Harvey Swinford described the unfair way that surviving spouses, mostly widows, of many deceased veterans are now treated. Under current law, a military widow who is entitled to Social Security and to coverage under the Defense Department's Survivor Benefits Plan finds that these two benefits must offset one another - which reduces the survivor benefits to 35 percent of the spouse's military retired pay, instead of the 55 percent the survivor was expecting.

It's hard to believe that we have a system that penalizes the aging survivors of the veterans of our nation, but this is exactly what the current Survivor Benefits Plan does!

I agree with DiRenza and Swinford that it is past time to change this misleading and unfair law. I have introduced a bill, H.R. 1232, The Military Survivors Equity Act, to fix the problem. It would eliminate this callous and absurd reduction of benefits and give the relatives of our deceased veterans exactly what they expect and deserve - 55 percent of their spouse's military retired pay.

I am working with my colleagues to pass this bill and eliminate the pain and anguish we are now causing our military retirees and their spouses.

This is a simple solution to a difficult problem, and an equitable solution to a mean-spirited practice.

BOB FILNER

Member of Congress
Washington, D. C.